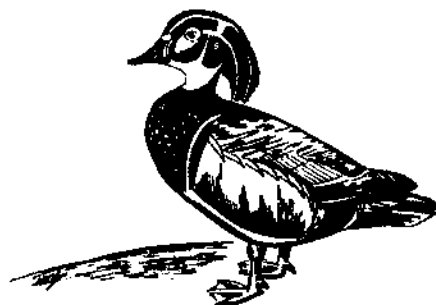


# **\*\*ATTENTION\*\***

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# WOOD DUCK



In the State of Washington

The wood duck *Aix sponsa* is the most beautiful of all ducks in the State of Washington. It is readily identified by brilliant markings of purple, green, bronze, black, and white on its head and body. Wood ducks frequent secluded marshes, ponds, and streams. They are the only one of the "puddle" ducks that habitually nest in trees. They do not nest in branches but always in cavities in the trunk or large branches. The hooded merganser has similar nesting habits and choice sites are often hotly contested.

The usual clutch is 10 to 15 dull white or creamy white eggs. Upon hatching, the young ducklings claw their way up the inside of the nesting site aided by exceedingly sharp hooked claws and hooked nails at the ends of their bill. Encouraged by the adult female, the young jump from the nest opening to the ground and follow her to a lake or marsh. No apparent harm seems to come to the young in spite of a fall of from 30 to 40 feet.

## HABITAT NEEDS

Food. The wood duck feeds on a wide variety of seeds, nuts, acorns, and animal matter although they seem to prefer vegetable matter. They may wander deep into the woods in search of preferred foods consisting of acorns, barley, barnyardgrass, bulrush, corn, crabapple, duckweed, filberts, pondweed (sago), smartweed, and wheat. Other foods they eat are coontail, grass, sedge, and skunkcabbage. Animal foods make up only about 10 percent of their diet and consist mainly of ants, dragon flies, damsel flies and their nymphs, grasshoppers, spiders, and mollusks.

Cover. The wood duck is found only where plenty of woody cover is available along streams or near lakes and ponds. Unlike most ducks, it

commonly perches in trees. It also is able to move very well on the ground. Nesting cover is provided by natural cavities or hollows in tree trunks. They will readily nest in boxes placed in suitable locations.

#### MANAGEMENT SUGGESTIONS

If you live along a stream or near a lake, marsh, or pond in Washington, you may be able to attract wood ducks to your area by constructing nesting boxes and placing them on suitable trees or mounting them on tall poles. These consist of an enclosed box 24 inches deep and 12 inches square with a 4-inch hole 18 or 19 inches above the floor. For best results, the box should be attached to the trunk of a tree at least 16 feet above the ground with the entrance hole plainly visible from the water area. If suitable trees are not available, the box may be placed on a pole firmly established in the ground. In all cases the nesting box should be made safe from predators, especially raccoons.

If the box is placed on a pole in a pond, it may be only 2 or 3 feet above the highest water level. Old trees along streams and around lakes or marshes often contain natural cavities used for nesting by wood ducks and these trees should be preserved.

